



# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETA RESEARCH AGENDA**

**2017 - 2020**

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## 1. Background

A credible sector skills planning should be underpinned by a responsive and comprehensive research agenda as encompassed in the National Skills Development Strategy III (DHET, 2011). Local Government is at the coal-face of service delivery, therefore it is pivotal that skills gaps are addressed through an informed sector skills planning that talks to the skills needs in the sector. A research agenda is critical in the realisation of the prioritised skills development areas and also to assist the institution to respond to the skills development challenges in the local government sector. In addition to this, a research agenda assists the institution to spend limited resources optimally as the funds would be spent according to the research scope. In the context of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA), a research agenda will embed on the sector's strategic focus areas which are informed by the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. The strategic focus areas are comprised of the following:

Councilor Development Programme, Traditional Leadership Programme, Management Capacity Programme, Union Leadership Programme, Information and Data System and Financial Unique Strategic Initiatives (Special Projects). These focus areas are complemented by the key municipal performance areas which are: Good governance and deepening of democracy, municipal transformation and institutional development, municipal financial viability and management, basic service delivery and infrastructure development as well as sustainable local economic development.

A responsive research agenda should also be informed by the National Priorities of the Government which have been identified and agreed on through a series of consultations between the government, business, labour and communities. In the context of skills development and the local government sector, the National Priorities of the Government will include the following: National Skills Development Strategy III, White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, National Development Plan 2030, Youth Employment Accord, Green Economy, Back-to-Basics, Human Resources Development Strategy, National Skills Accord and Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy. Of significant to note is that the research themes will be informed by the above policy frameworks, pieces of legislation, SETA strategic focus areas, key municipal performance areas and national government priorities.

It is the understanding of the LGSETA that a research agenda will be incomplete without a methodology and strategy, consequently the SETA has partnered with the institutions of higher learning and research bodies through a Memorandum of Understanding. In addition to this, the

LGSETA will also forge collaborations with international institutions with the relevant expertise in skills development, particularly in the local government sector.

## **2. Purpose and objectives of the research agenda**

The research was conducted with the aim of achieving the following purpose and objectives:

- ✓ To prioritise the research areas aiming at addressing the skills gaps in the local government sector;
- ✓ To explore the untapped areas in the sector that warrant immediate intervention by the LGSETA;
- ✓ To assist the LGSETA to spend its resources optimally as it will only focus on the priority areas contained in the research agenda;
- ✓ To ensure consistency in the research development and maintain the focus;

## **3. Policy context**

The research agenda will be informed by the following policy framework:

- ✓ White Policy on Post-School Education (DHET, 2013) – This policy document was launched on 06<sup>th</sup> January 2014, and amongst other priority areas that the SETAs should take seriously is the implementation of the research and partnering with research bodies as well as the institutions of higher learning. In responding to this framework, the LGSETA will link its research to the initiatives encompassed in the document;
- ✓ Youth Employment Accord - partnership between government and its social partners to create five million new jobs by 2020. The parties to the accord recognize that youth unemployment is a major national challenge and there is a need to expand opportunities for greater

- employment and empowerment of youth in the economy (Youth Employment Accord, 2013). In the context of the LGSETA, the youth employment opportunities will be prioritised through a research on marine resources with the aim of identifying the skills gaps in the field;
- ✓ Human Resources Development Strategy - The Human Resource Development Strategy concept was adopted to support a holistic approach to human resource training and development in the Public Service. To enable it to actualize its constitutional mandate of creating a better life for all, the government envisages a Public Service that is guided by the ethos of service and committed to the provision of high quality service. The Public Service is faced with the challenge of training and transforming its employees in a manner that will not only benefit government in its quest for excellent service delivery, but will empower the individual employee as well the Human Resources Development Strategy (2010). In conducting its research, the LGSETA will take into consideration of the skills gaps as identified in the Human Resources Development Strategy.
  - ✓ National Skills Development III – A Policy Framework that guides the SETAs in facilitating the implementation of skills development and amongst other objectives establishes a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning through research (National Skills Development III, 2011). The LGSETA will also be guided by the goals and objectives contained in the National Skills Development Strategy in its implementation of the sectoral research;
  - ✓ Green Economy Accord - An agreement between government, business and labour, committing each to tangible targets in achieving low carbon based economic development growth through renewable energy (Green Economy Accord, 2013). Regarding a green economy, the LGSETA will be conducting research on green occupations relevant for the local government sector and the outcome will be influential towards qualifications development and conceptualization of strategic projects that will empower both employed and unemployed people;
  - ✓ National Development Plan 2030 (The Presidency, 2011) – a policy document that aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society. The LGSETA Research Agenda will consider mapping an alignment to the NDP's greater labour absorption target for 2030, with a view to inform annual targets for the Local Government Sector;
  - ✓ Back-to-Basics – Approach by the Department of Co-operative Governance to address the inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the municipalities through interventions that will involve the strengthening of the workforce through capacity-building (Department of Co-

operative and Governance, 2014). The LGSETA in the past has been prioritising sectoral research underpinned by the key municipal performance areas and strategic focus areas;

- ✓ Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy – Cabinet approved the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) on 12 August 2009. The CRDP is premised on three phases:
  - 1) Phase One, which has meeting basic human needs as its driver;
  - 2) Phase Two, which has large-scale infrastructure development as its driver; and
  - 3) Phase Three, with the emergence of rural industrial and credit financial sectors, which are driven by small, micro and medium enterprises and the village market.

The above phases will be achieved through:

- 1) contributing to the redistribution of 30% of the country's agricultural land;
- 2) improving food security of the rural poor;
- 3) creating business opportunities;
- 4) decongesting and rehabilitating over- crowded former homeland areas; and
- 5) expanding opportunities for rural women, youth, people with disabilities and older people.

In the context of the LGSETA, research in local economic development will be prioritised and its outcomes will be instrumental in boosting economic opportunities in the local government sector through the identification of the skills gap and implementation of skills development interventions.

#### **4. Research priority areas**

For the period 2017-2020, the research priority areas will be centered on the SETA's strategic focus areas as tabled below:

##### **✓ Management Capacity Programme**

Management Capacity Programme is one of the strategic focus areas of the LGSETA and the heart-beat of service delivery in the municipalities. This area has also been found wanting based on the management challenges the municipalities are facing. Such management challenges resonate on political interference and skills gaps. It is within this context of this understanding that the LGSETA has identified this area as a concern, consequently it is therefore prioritised for research. For the period 2017-2020, the following research themes will be areas of focus:

- 1) Analysis of mentoring the middle management professionals;
- 2) Exploring the skills development intervention of the Section 56 and Section 57 Managers;
- 3) Understanding the challenges faced by the administrative leadership in the municipalities;
- 4) Understanding the skills development impact assessment on both Section 56 and Section 57 Managers;
- 5) Skills transfer in the workplace;
- 6) The effects of brain-drain in the local government sector;
- 7) Bringing the professional bodies on board: A skills development perspective;
- 8) A review of the Local Government Management & Performance;
- 9) Investigate the urban resilience towards a city;
- 10) Professionalising Local government administration in South Africa;
- 11) The application of Administrative Law and Good governance principles within Municipalities;
- 12) The role of municipal leaders in accelerating transformation and service delivery in local government;
- 13) The use of the balance scorecard tool by municipal leaders and managers in managing performance among municipalities;
- 14) Ethics in the Public Service;
- 15) Professionalism: from training municipal officials for competence to training for commitment

- 16) Combating fraud in municipalities in South Africa: the case of fraud prevention plans
- 17) The establishment of standard draft by-laws to ensure compliance with Part B of Schedule 4 of the Constitution
- 18) Evaluation of the talent leadership in the local government sector;
- 19) Research on quality management towards appropriate recognition by the LGSETA of non-formal (“non-degree”) courses offered by Higher Education institutions;
- 20) Design and implementation of a career guidance and retention mechanism for early career local government officials utilising exposure to the Constitution and NDP;
- 21) Harmonising relationships between ward councillors and traditional leaders toward infrastructure development in rural jurisdictions;
- 22) Understanding how the principals of cooperative governance (a constitutional principal) can be used to align the three tiers of government with a view of enhancing a primary function of local government: Local Economic Development;
- 23) Impact assessment on the Municipal Finance Management Programme in the municipalities;
- 24) The priority of the municipal competency certificate;
- 25) Understanding the impact of the Municipal Finance Management Act in creating a sound financial management;
- 26) Impact assessment on the discretionary funded projects;
- 27) Addressing the state of financial management in the municipalities focusing on: Managing audit outcomes and financial capabilities, including the implementation of budgets as well as ability of municipalities to improve their revenue collection and revenue sources;
- 28) Financial Skills challenges in the Local Government Sector;
- 29) Comparative analysis of the municipal billing system on revenue collection;
- 30) Local government funding and cuts: implications for municipal employees; and



✓ **Councillor Development Programme**

The local government sector had newly elected municipal councilors that had assumed the duties and responsibilities in August 2016. In order for the councilors to be effective in their daily activities, strategic interventions should be executed and which should be informed by the research projects reflected below:

- 1) The role of political leadership in good municipal financial governance;
- 2) Community-based planning processes in South Africa's local government sphere: A study on good practices;
- 3) Community based participation and planning Skills area: Ward committees LGSETA support intervention;
- 4) The role of Councils and Senior Officials in performance management.
- 5) The politics- Administrative inter-face within Municipalities;
- 6) Critical analysis on the impact of dysfunctional relationship between political and administrative leadership;
- 7) Deepening democracy through efficient oversight role by municipal councilors
- 8) Challenges faced by Local Government leadership Councillors that impede optimal functioning in their various portfolios and enhancing good corporate governance.

✓ **Traditional Leadership Programme**

In relation to the Traditional Leadership Programme, the Local Government SETA will provide capacity-building programmes and initiatives to the traditional leadership. The traditional leaderships continue to play a pivotal role in the advancement of communities. It is against this background that the responsive interventions should be put in place and the following research projects will be implemented during the period 2017-2020:

- 1) An assessment of skills capacity requirements for Traditional Leadership and its institutions in delivering their mandate in municipalities;
- 2) A critical analysis of the role of the traditional leadership in community development activities;

✓ **Unique Strategic Initiatives (Special Projects);**

The Unique Strategic Initiatives will be developed based on different and critical areas where the Local Government SETA might respond to the demand and needs of the sector. In identifying the initiatives and intervention for this focus area, the Local Government SETA will be prioritizing the following research areas:

- 1) Understanding the skills gaps in the municipalities' infrastructure;
- 2) In-depth analysis on the service delivery in the municipalities;
- 3) Role of the Public-Private-Partnership in the improvement of the infrastructure in the municipalities;
- 4) Transport Planning in the local government sector;
- 5) Water and wastewater management in the local government sector;
- 6) Analysis of the green economy occupations in the local government sector;
- 7) Technical skills challenges in the municipalities: Is it due to new/emerging occupations or lack of sector attractiveness?
- 8) Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Sector – Phase III;
- 9) Evaluation of municipal wastewater treatment for reuse;
- 10) The viability of e-techniques towards service delivery;
- 11) Performance of biological municipal wastewater systems;
- 12) Municipal wastewater treatment for energy production;
- 13) Exploring better utilisation of wastewater sludge for food production;
- 14) Developing cost sharing models for provision of improved water in local communities;
- 15) Water treatment quantity and quality evaluation within the context of emerging socio-economic challenges;
- 16) Managing brackish drinking water in local municipalities;

- 17) Evaluation of municipal wastewater treatment for reuse;
- 18) Sustainable municipal water and wastewater treatment techniques;
- 19) Exploring opportunities of Energy & Water Savings practices in local governments;
- 20) Exploring the state of turnover and retention in critical municipal positions;
- 21) Learning interventions in the era of new models of municipal service delivery;
- 22) Incorporation of environmental considerations into strategic municipal planning;
- 23) Improving Alien Invader Plant management knowledge and skills through blended learning;
- 24) Improving climate change adaptation knowledge and skills through blended learning;
- 25) Improving environmental legal compliance knowledge and skills for Local Government through blended learning;
- 26) Improving Integrated Municipal Waste Management Planning knowledge and skills through online learning;
- 27) Improving Sustainable Urbanism knowledge and skills through blended learning;
- 28) The creation and development of an interactive application to enhance efficiency in the attainment of legal compliance;
- 29) The alternative service delivery mechanisms for local government.
- 30) Capacity-building of the SMMEs in the municipalities;
- 31) Strengthening of the LED Units in the municipalities;
- 32) Role of the Public-Private Partnership in boosting local economic development;
- 33) Mapping of the Local Government Sector Occupations;
- 34) An assessment of the implementation of Back-to-Basics programme among the Municipalities;
- 35) The synergy between IDP and LED in creating employment opportunities and eliminating poverty in rural municipalities;
- 36) Informal markets and sustainable local economic development (LED) in rural South Africa;
- 37) Enabling local economic development through municipal legislative review;
- 38) The state of gender equality in local government: Can skills be leveraged to address disparities?
- 39) Antecedents of community engagement strategies in the City of Cape Town;

40) Project on improving service delivery through people development.

✓ **Worker Leadership Programme**

In relation to the organized labour leadership programme, the LGSETA will provide capacity-building programmes and initiatives to the union within the local government sector. The relevancy of such intervention should be informed by a credible research and the following research areas will be implemented:

- 1) Understanding the factors leading to a high drop-out rate in the AET programme;
- 2) Support provided to the AET learners by their superiors;
- 3) Analysis of the AET methodologies in the municipalities;
- 4) Challenges facing the AET intervention;
- 5) AET and foundational learning Skills area: professional development - LGSETA support intervention;
- 6) The role of the workplace training systems in the implementation of skills development interventions in the municipalities;
- 7) Challenges faced by the SDFs in the implementation of the skills development interventions;
- 8) Understanding the skills gaps for the Skills Development Facilitators;
- 9) Improving the process of collection, collation, analysis and planning of the WSP/ATR in order to improve SETA planning and implementation of programmes. This study will also focus on the following: An assessment of Municipal Human Resource systems in collecting skills planning data
- 10) Workplace Committee Training on new water management technologies for emerging challenges.
- 11) Analysis of the RPL methodology or application per occupation;
- 12) Barriers in the implementation of the RPL;
- 13) RPL as a useful avenue in motivating the respective employees;
- 14) Support provided to the municipalities in the implementation of the RPL.
- 15) Towards Implementing HR RPL Toolkit for Municipalities

- 16) Funding model for managing the mediated RPL process in South African Municipalities
- 17) Implementing HR RPL Toolkit for Municipalities
- 18) Identifying the challenges of implementing Recognition of Prior Learning in LGSETA's priority skills lists
- 19) Strengthening Opportunities for Workplace-focused RPL: Lessons Learned in local government

✓ **Information and Data Management**

One of the challenges facing the Local Government SETA is the inability to track and trace the learners who participated in the skills development interventions in the local government sector as well as the discretionary-funded programmes to enable the Local Government SETA to extract the labour market data for skills demand and supply for the sector. It is with this aim in mind that the Local Government SETA will be conducting research on the projects outlined below:

- 1) Tracer study on the beneficiaries who participated in the Local Government SETA funded programmes Impact assessment on the Municipal Finance Management Programme in the municipalities;

**5. Key Municipal Performance areas**

Below are the key municipal performance areas complementing the above LGSETA strategic focus areas:

- ✓ Good governance and the deepening of democracy;
- ✓ Municipal transformation and institutional development;
- ✓ Municipal financial viability and management;
- ✓ Basic service delivery and infrastructure development;
- ✓ Sustainable local economic development

## **6. Section 4 Part B of the Republic of South Africa Constitution**

This Section deals with the role of local government in ensuring that the communities are provided with services which will ultimately lead to the promotion of the general welfare of the people. Below are the research projects linked to the Section 4 Part B of the Constitution:

- ✓ The establishment of standard draft by-laws to ensure compliance with Part B of Schedule 4 of the Constitution.

## **7. Research methodology and strategy**

In the implementation of its research agenda, the LGSETA will utilise a triangulation of research methods which include both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Below are the enablers of these qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

### **7.1 Secondary sources will be used in conducting research:**

#### **7.1.1 Literature Review**

- ✓ Government policy and strategic documents
- ✓ Commissioned Research
- ✓ Official Reports
- ✓ Research studies on particular areas
- ✓ Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS)
- ✓ Stats-SA

#### **7.1.2. Primary sources will also be used to inform the research:**

- ✓ WSP/ATR analysis
- ✓ Expert Panel/Roundtable discussions
- ✓ Focus Group Discussions

- ✓ Tracer Study
- ✓ Seminars
- ✓ Research Colloquiums

**8. Partnerships with the research bodies and institutions of higher learning**

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training reflected a need for the SETAs to partner with the institutions and research bodies. It is within this context of understanding that the LGSETA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with such institutions. Below is a list of the institutions that are collaborating with the LGSETA through the MoUs and partnership is centered on the Local Government SETA Strategic Focus Areas, Key Municipal Performance Areas, Section 4 Part B of the Constitution of the Republic of South African Constitution and National Government Priorities:

- ✓ University of Fort Hare;
- ✓ University of Venda;
- ✓ Human Sciences Research Council;
- ✓ Council of Scientific and Industrial Research;
- ✓ Vaal University of Technology;
- ✓ University of Witwatersrand;
- ✓ University of Stellenbosch;
- ✓ University of Pretoria;
- ✓ Productivity South Africa;
- ✓ Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University;
- ✓ Centre for Education Policy Development;

- ✓ University of North West;
- ✓ University of Western Cape;
- ✓ Rhodes University;
- ✓ University of Kwazulu-Natal

In addition to this, the LGSETA also intends to establish a formal working relationship with the University of Free State, and the City of Atlanta in Georgia (United States of America).

The LGSETA also notes the role played by Professional Bodies in the advancement of research. It is against this background that partnering with the Professional Bodies will be of a greater value to the LGSETA, as they will bring in their expertise from different disciplines. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training articulates that collaborative research projects with other countries carry significant benefits and will be encouraged, in particular, research partnerships involving African countries and other developing countries, including Brazil, Russia, India, and China and South Africa (BRIC countries). In this regard, the LGSETA will identify and partner with the international institutions that have expertise in the field of the local government.

## **9. Research Funding and Procurement**

Funding is one of the strategic resources in the implementation of the research. In achieving the objectives of the research agenda, the LGSETA will be funding all its research projects, but in case of the cross-cutting research, the funding will be sourced from both parties. The LGSETA will be executing its research using a partnership model with the institutions of higher learning and research bodies through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). It is also significant to note that the LGSETA partners with the institutions with great expertise in the local government discipline and that have a track record in this sector. In addition to this, the LGSETA will also be implementing its research through the open tendering system



**10. Research Themes for the Financial Year 2017-2018**

No	Title of research	Aim of research	Anticipated date of completion	Budget
1.	Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Sector – Phase III	✓ To develop a skills needs model that will enable the LGSETA to project skills needs, supply and demand for local government sector using one area as a focus area	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
2.	Funding model for managing the mediated RPL process in South African Municipalities	✓ Implement a programme to test, evaluate and if appropriate, improve the costing model for RPL and the guideline and associated tools for HR practitioners	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
3.	Addressing the state of financial management in the municipalities focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Managing audit outcomes and financial capabilities, including the implementation of budgets</li> <li>✓ Ability of municipalities to improve their revenue collection and revenue sources</li> </ul>	✓ To critically understand the best practices that could lead to a better audit outlook in both improved and deteriorating municipalities. To also assess the ability of municipalities to collect revenues and review their revenue streams and sources.	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
4.	Improving the process of collection, collation, analysis and planning of the WSP/ATR in order to improve SETA planning and implementation of	✓ To understand the challenges facing the compilation of the WSP/ATR, its repercussions and possible solutions	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA

	<p>programmes. This study will also focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ An assessment of <b>Municipal Human Resource</b> systems in collecting skills planning data</li> </ul>			
5.	Challenges faced by Local Government leadership Councillors that impede optimal functioning in their various portfolios and enhancing good corporate governance	✓ To assess skills and other challenges that are facing local government Councillors in the sector in delivering their the roles and responsibilities	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
6.	Professionalising/Repositioning Local government sector	✓ To consolidate understanding on developmental government barriers; streamline requisite performance improvement imperatives, skills development and initiate reinvention and scale-up of service delivery advancement in Municipalities;	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
7.	Evaluation of municipal wastewater treatment for reuse	✓ To evaluate the existing wastewater treatment capacity and consider improvement to produce potable water by integrating new technologies	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
8.	An assessment of skills capacity requirements for Traditional Leadership and its institutions in delivering their mandate in municipalities	✓ To examine what skills and capabilities are required by Traditional Leadership and its institutions in order to properly execute their responsibilities in municipalities and with other spheres of governance	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA

9.	Mapping of the Local Government Sector Occupations	✓ To develop a common understanding on the local government sector occupations	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA
10.	Developing marine resources at the local government level by identifying the role of local government in the development and management of marine resources	✓ To examine existing legislation, policy and current research data to determine the role of local government in developing marine resources.	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	TBA

## 11. Conclusion

This strategic document outlines the methodology that the LGSETA will implement in conducting its research and is underpinned by the Strategic Focus Areas complimented by the key municipal performance areas. The National Government priorities will always be realized as they play a role in addressing the skills gaps. The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training has made it clear that the SETAs must forge partnerships with the institutions of higher learning and research bodies with the aim of drawing research expertise that should be instrumental in providing quality Sector Skills Plan. This document has also taken into account of the need to partner with the international institutions that have strength in both the local government and public management disciplines.



LGSETA BOARD CHAIRPERSON – MICHAEL SUTCLIFFE

DATE 14/08/2017

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